

Veranda Jumping

by Nikki Kirk

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Disclaimer: Well, well, well. So, you want to sue me, eh Hal? Well you can just forget about that coz I take no responsibility whatsoever for swiping the Rats dolls. And I think you should be happy and give us all free takeaways because this site is great publicity for the show! And because of this site, and the stories on it, I'm going to let Dee Smart have a go and see if she can make me still watch the show, because I wasn't going to after both Colin Freils and Catherine McClements left! So you should be very grateful to Funky and Spunky for letting us all develop our artistic talents on stories on the show. So there. And to anyone else who wants to have a moan or rip money out of my penniless accounts, go jump in Lake Taupo (central North Island, New Zealand, and it's still a volcano - the biggest volcano in the WORLD and it's still active!!! Eek, spooky!). I think that about covers it! But I'm always open to "gifts" of money, Maccas, chocolate, flowers, Honda Accords, Holden Commodores (Accord is preferred, but a Commo'd do I spose.) and I would be absolutely be delighted if I was "gifted" a holiday which would have to consist of: at LEAST 10 Nights in Sydney staying in a luxurious Hotel with my Mum and Australian Terrier, Ozzie (aka Oscar or Booboo or DOOOOOGGGG!!!!), all expenses paid, free rental car (a luxury one of course which would let us bring Oz), at LEAST \$20000 spending money (Australian), flights in Luxury class on either Air

New Zealand or Quantas, Free meals in expensive restaurants scattered around Sydney, passes to go and see the Water Rats set, twice, hmm, what else... oh, fresh flowers and boxes of chocolates in the hotel room every day and maybe even a small (or large) part on a Rats episode would be lovely too, don't ya think? Hmm. Right, I think that about does it, don't you? Oh, and did I mention, ALL EXPENSES PAID FOR???!!!!.....

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Author's Notes: Well, well, well. Ain't life weird, eh? I had a suspicion, but I'm now Joint Editor of our school magazine. Teeheehee! First sixth former to be an Editor at our school? I don't know, but whatever, I think that's really groovy. HAHAAH!!! We beat the Aussies by HEAPS in the last one-dayer in Auckland!!! Okay, granted we lost all the rest, but the last one was groovy! I can't believe we got 194/3!!! And the Aussies got 192/9! Yahoooooo! Anywho, I'm going to the cricket!!! With Charmaine! Yay. Can't wait. AND we won the America's Cup AGAIN!!! Yippee! I love New Zealand. And I've been to the cup village! I feel so proud... Anywho, on with the story I suppose!

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Dedications: Uh... to everyone I have previously mentioned, okay? Groovy.

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>Veranda Jumping
By Nikki Kirk

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>Detective Frank Holloway of the Sydney Water Police woke with a start. He sat up in bed, wondering what had startled him from his sleep. He got out of bed and crept out into the hallway. He ducked back as he saw a torch beam flashing around the lounge, then crept across the carpet in the direction of the light. He paused silently in the doorway, scanning the dark figure clothed in black to see if the intruder had a gun or not. He couldn't see one, so he waited until... "POLICE!!! GET ON THE GROUND NOOOOW!!!" Frank roared at the intruder, jumping on top of him... only to find that it was, in fact, a her.
Frank grabbed the woman's wrists tightly, produced his mobile, and proceeded to call the "boys of the night" at the station.

>"Wait... please..." The woman had a soft voice.
"Why the hell should I, eh?" Frank snarled angrily, flicking on the light.

>"Because... because..." The woman began, but she needn't have bothered. Frank immediately saw why. She was a young girl, maybe sixteen at the most. She had scars and bruises all over her neck, hands and face. She had a black eye that was swollen shut. An angry-looking cut on her head glistened with fresh blood.
"Oh... jeez..." Frank could only begin, loosening his grip slightly when he spotted the reason why the girl looked to be in agony... he was squeezing what looked and felt like a broken bone in her wrist hard.

>The girl looked up sadly with her blue eyes that were full of pain, pleading for Frank to hang up the phone. And he did. He would hear what she had to say, then take her into work in the morning... well, in five hours time since it was five in the morning. "Well?" Frank prompted her.
"I...I..." The girl managed to stutter before dissolving into tears.

>"Here, sit down and tell me who did this to you and why you broke in." Frank put his hand protectively around the girl's shoulders and guided her towards the couch.
After a while trying to comfort her he finally managed to get her from bawling her eyes out to mere sniffs and sobs. "Can you at least tell me your name?" Frank asked quietly.

>The girl looked up at him, and between sniffs managed to stutter

"Lisa. Lisa Hemmingway.".

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>"Lisa Hemmingway... Lisa Hemmingway..." Helen hunted for her name on the COPS network at the station early in the morning.
Frank had let Rachel talk to Lisa while he'd come to find out some details about the girl since she wasn't giving any away. "Lisa Hemmingway... Woah, you got a case on your hands here Frank! She was kidnapped from her home three years ago in Wanganui, New Zealand. The case was never solved, no traces of her were found, no clues led to anything, and the New Zealand Police have her case marked "murder"." Tayler huddled over Helen to read the file on the screen.

>"Jeez..." Tayler breathed in astonishment, "Poor kid!".
"Yeah... No wonder she was such a mess!" Frank scratched his chin and took a printout of the details from Helen.

>"You sure you shouldn't hand this case over to Central City? I mean, it was your house, nothing to do with the water as far as we know..." Helen suggested.
"Nah, she said something about arriving on a boat to me this morning when I caught her. Sounds like whoever kidnapped her dragged her over here on a boat." Frank explained, heading to the stairwell backwards, almost bumping into Mick who was on his way down.

>"Right. Your call." Helen went back to showing Tayler the new version of the COPS program.

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>"You feeling better Lisa?" Frank asked as he waltzed back into the office to find his partner, Senior Detective Constable Rachel "Goldie" Goldstein talking to the young woman at her desk.
"Yeah... thanks." Lisa avoided eye contact with him, and just stared at a pen on Rachel's desk.

>Frank raised his eyebrows in Rachel's direction, their sign language to say "Anything?". Rachel raised her eyebrows quickly twice, for "yes!", then looked back at Lisa who was looking totally devastated.
"Lisa, do you want a coffee?" Rachel asked, placing her hand on top of the girl's.

>"Yeah, that'd be nice, thanks." Lisa nodded sadly, her long blonde hair falling in a cascade around her bruised and battered face.
"Milk? Sugar?" Rachel asked, motioning with a quick look towards the door that Frank should follow.

>"Yeah, milk, two sugars, ta." Lisa refused to make eye contact with anyone.
"Right." Rachel smiled weakly in her direction and headed out the door with Frank at her heels.

>The pair wandered down the hall to the meal room, which was on the top half of the building along with their office, the D's office. "Jeez, she's in a bad way. She obviously was being forcibly detained somewhere around here. She just began bawling her eyes out in the interview room and said she didn't like it, so I decided to interview her in our room." Rachel muttered, turning on the coffee machine, which she'd donated to the meal room a few weeks ago in an effort to get Frank, who was putting on a few excess kilos, to walk more.
"Hmm... You reckon she's gonna tell us who her kidnapper is?"

>"Nah, not until she knows one of us well enough to know we're to be trusted."
"Mmm. I was gonna take her down to the hospital to get her wrist sorted out..."

>"Her wrist?"
"Yeah, when I grabbed her by the wrists I could feel the break. She was in agony, poor kid."

>"Ouch... Yeah, might be an idea to get it checked... I'll come with ya." Rachel said, subconsciously rubbing her own wrist.
"Mmm, just what I was thinking." Frank scratched his forehead, a sure sign that he was thinking something over.

>"Frank. Frank!" Rachel snapped him out of his daydreaming state by shoving a coffee in his direction.
"Eh? Oh yeah. Right." Frank took his coffee, still deep in thought, and followed Rachel back to the D's office.

>"Here ya go." Rachel placed a cup in front of Lisa who just sat there as if she were a plaster sculpture.
Lisa, is there anyone I can contact for you? Your family over in New Zealand will want to know you're alive..."

>"NOOO!!! He'll kill me, he'll kill me, HE WILL KILL ME!!! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?" Lisa suddenly began screaming and howling, her body shaking violently.
"Lisa! Lisa! No one is going to hurt you, I won't *let* them! Lisa... what's he done to you, eh? What's he done?" Rachel threw her arms around the distraught girl whose face was streaming with hot tears and rocked her like a child.

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"Here it is... yuck, what a dump, eh?" Rachel remarked as she steered the green Mitsubishi Magna into the driveway.

>"I reckon." Frank replied, looking at the skeletons of old cars, the toppled clothesline with faded clothes still on it, the ripped sofas scattered around, and the broken beer bottles littering the so-called garden which consisted of a few long-dead bushes.
The pair got out of the car and headed towards what looked to be the front door - a piece of wood with a broken door handle and dents all through it which looked to have been made by an axe. Frank knocked and the pair stood back on the step and waited. They heard heavy footsteps and creaking floorboards, then saw a ripped and moth-eaten old drape in one of the broken windows which hadn't been boarded up get pulled back momentarily. The doorknob turned and the door opened slowly to reveal a tiny girl of about four years of age. She was wearing a dirty, torn dress and her long brown hair was a thick, matted mess. "What do you want?" The little girl asked shyly, anger glinting in her eyes; whether directed towards them or an unknown adult, neither detective was sure.

>"Is your Daddy or Mummy in?" Frank asked gently, returning Rachel's look of disgust.
"No. What do you want?!" The little girl seemed agitated.

>"Are there any adults here with you?" Rachel asked quickly, a demanding tone in her voice.
"Uh... uh... No." The little girl stepped aside, figuring that they'd look after her, maybe even feed her.

>"Thanks." Rachel ducked past the little girl to have a look around.
The pair quickly looked through the house to see if the suspect, Adrian Millar, was anywhere to be seen. But they quickly found that all of his clothes and personal possessions were gone. The house was more of a mess than outside of it. The furniture looked as though it had been through several earthquakes, tsunamis and tornadoes. The carpet on the floor was down to the bare threads. Most of the windows were cracked, broken, or simply not even there. Kids were walking, crawling, or lying around everywhere dressed in scruffy old clothes with rips, tears and dirt everywhere. Suddenly the little girl appeared again, tugging on Rachel's navy business skirt. "Scuse me Miss, but Daddy and Mummy left us at home on Tuesday, and they haven't come back, and I don't know how to cook, and... and..." The little girl started crying, and Rachel picked her up and held her.

>"It's okay sweetie. How about you get your brothers and sisters, and we'll take you back to the Police Station and look after you, okay?" Frank said, turning fatherly for a moment.
The little girl flashed a small smile at him through tear-filled blue eyes and sniffed. "But first we need to find out your names, eh?" Rachel smiled gently at

the little girl and stroked her matted hair.
>"Uh... uh... I'm Samantha..., she's Louisa, that's Melanie, he's Todd, he's Alexander, he's Tommy, she's Zeena, he's Peter." The little girl pointed to each of the children around the house in turn. Alexander and Tommy looked to be identical twins, and the youngest two, Louisa and Peter, were probably twins as well. Rachel pulled her mobile out of her pocket and put Samantha down while she called Helen. "Helen, Rachel. Look, Millar and his wife have split, leaving... one, two, three... eight kids home alone. They haven't eaten anything substantial since Tuesday, so that's what, two, three days, today being Thursday.... We'll bring them back to the station and let Social Services deal with them, eh? Nah, the place is a mess and the Social workers take hours to get anywhere. Yeah, can you send some other cars over to help bring the kids back? We can only fit three in. And the youngest pair are... oh, I dunno, say nine months old? Yeah, they're only little. I dunno. Yeah, okay, thanks Helen." Rachel hung up and looked at Frank with weary eyes.
Frank gazed around at the scene. It was straight out of a horror movie.

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Samantha swung her legs around in the air as she sat on a hard chair in the interview room with a Social Worker beside her. Rachel and Frank sat on the other side, looking tired. They'd already interviewed all of the other kids that could talk, but had come up with nothing, except that the kids had sometimes seen Lisa, and she'd babysat for them occasionally.
>"So what did you feed the babies while your parents were gone?"
"The formula in the fridge."
>"Was there some in there?"
"Yeah."
>"Okay... Samantha, do you know a girl called Lisa?" Frank began, tapping his pen on his desk.
"Yeah, she babysat for Mum and Dad sometimes when they could be bothered calling her..." Samantha said slowly, obviously not too happy about this whole escapade.
>"So she never lived at your house?"
"Yeah, for a few days about a month ago... she took us to school and stuff. She seemed really scared of Dad." Samantha looked down at the table, and began hitting her bare feet against the frame of the chair.
>"Yeah? In what way?" Rachel's eyebrows shot up.
"I dunno. He'd smack her around a bit when she wouldn't do something, like wash the dishes, or if she tried to run away." Samantha sounded much older than she looked.
>"How old are you Samantha?" Frank suddenly asked.
"Eleven."

>The two Detectives were surprised, she was so tiny and skinny she looked like she was only seven or eight years old. Her age explained the amount of kids. "Did your Mum and Dad look after you?" Rachel asked.
"No." Samantha said bluntly, "I was the one who fed the kids, Mum just cooked. I gave them baths, and I'm not good at that. I hung out the washing until the line broke last year, and I got a beating for that. I did the dishes, until we ran out of dishwashing liquid."
>"Yeah? You're very responsible, aren't you?" Frank smiled at the girl in an attempt to make her more at ease.
Samantha just looked away, refusing to meet his gaze. "Why do you do that Samantha?" Frank asked quietly.
>"Do what?"
"Not look me in the eye."
>"Coz Mum and Dad give me hidings if I do."
"Have they given you a hiding lately?"
>"Yeah, when I didn't make Dad's coffee right."
"You got any marks?"

>"Yeah." Samantha pulled up her top to reveal substantial bruising over her lower left ribs, a cut across her stomach. She then stood up and hitched up one side of her skirt. A massive bruise that was about the size of Samantha's hand was printed deeply into her thigh muscle. She pulled her matted brown hair back from her face to reveal a blackened cheekbone and a slightly black eye. Then she turned around and pulled up the back of her top with the help of the Social Worker to reveal what looked like deep cuts from a whipping.
"Oh...." Rachel moaned.

>"Bastard..." Frank whispered under his breath.

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>"Samantha? Oh, honey!" Lisa rushed in to see if she was hallucinating.
"Lisa! Mum... and Dad..." Samantha started crying and buried her head in Lisa's stomach.

>"I know hun, I know. The nice Detectives told me. Did you tell them everything?" Lisa asked, stroking Samantha's head.
"Yeah..." Samantha sniffled.

>"Good, good girl." Lisa sat in a chair and pulled Samantha onto her lap and cradled her like a mother would.
Rachel and Frank stood in the doorway. "You reckon she'll talk now?" Frank quietly asked Rachel, looking at Lisa.

>"Yeah, may as well give it a go." Rachel nodded.
"Lisa, can we interview you now?" Frank wandered over towards the pair.

>"But, Samantha..."
"It's okay, Tina, the Social Worker, will look after her."

>"Yeah, okay." Lisa agreed and followed the two Detectives into the interview room down the hall.

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>"So where do you reckon it was?" Frank asked, referring to Millar's hideout where he kept Lisa.
"Dunno. Kings Cross area somewhere. Back of a pub. Said he owned it. I didn't believe him." Lisa said quietly, wishing she didn't have to relive this whole case.

>"Right. Would you know it if you saw it?" Rachel asked.
"Nah, I was blindfolded about ten minutes before we got there, or after we left to go somewhere."

>"Right. So how did you know it was in Kings Cross?"
"Coz I heard one of the regular patrons yelling at his mate."

>"Yeah? Do you remember what he said exactly?"
"I reckon this is probably the best suburb in the world. Kings Cross forever matey. I think that was it."

>"How do you know he wasn't referring to something else?"
"Because he was a regular and sometimes came in and yelled about the roadworks."

>"Right. You're absolutely positive?"
"Yeah."

>"Why do you think he kidnapped you?" Frank asked with a yawn.
"I dunno. He said something about a 'long-lost daughter' to me one day."

>"Yeah? So you think he thought you were his daughter?"
"I suppose so."

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Rachel and Frank drove along one of the main roads through Kings Cross, Sydney; infamous for prostitutes and adult entertainment stores. It also had one of the highest crime rates in the whole of Sydney City. The streets were relatively quiet right now, being mid to late afternoon. They were driving through a section of Kings Cross where double-storied shops were common. They'd been built in the first half of the 1900s. Most were painted in deep greens or crimsons, today's "trendy" colours. They were looking for Adrian Millar's business, the pub Lisa had told them about.

>"Could be any one of these, Frank!" Rachel groaned in disappointment.
"Keep yer hair on Goldie!" Frank teased, looking at all of the pubs in dismay.

>"So what do we do, go door knocking?"
"Nah, might arouse suspicion. She said he owned it, right? And that he kept her in an upstairs apartment with a single bay window? And it was boarded up from the inside so that she couldn't see out?"

>"Yeah... But most of these upstairs apartments have... hey! Stop! Look up there! The windows are boarded up..." Rachel was grinning at the sudden turn in the case.
"From the inside!" Frank exclaimed.

>"Are you thinking what I'm thinking, D1?" Rachel grinned.
"I think I'm thinking what you're thinking, D2!" Frank smirked.

>"Let's go in and investigate." The pair said in unison.
Frank parked the Green Magna opposite the small pub and the pair got out. They wandered across the street dodging a few couriers and cars, then entered the pub through the double doors. Inside the room was clouded with thick cigarette smoke. It was dark apart from some dim light from small spotlights studding the ceiling. Great big hairy blokes were smoking by the bar, their enormous stomachs overflowing their overly tight black jeans. They looked up and wolf-whistled at the attractive female Detective and gave Frank a macho glare. "Yeah, how ya doin? Eh? Life treatin ya good? Yeah?" Frank decided to act all macho as well.

>"Get your ugly mug outa my face." Goldie said loudly to a young guy who was trying to chat her up.
"Ooohooohoo!" The guys all backed off.

>"Got a lively one there, Slugger!" Someone yelled from down the back.
"Any of you blokes seen Adrian Millar? Eh? I wanna have a word with him." Rachel put her hand on her hip and looked positively ferocious.

>"Will ya give us sexual favours if we tell ya?" A repulsive little fat bloke winked at her with all the sleaze he could muster.
"If you were the last guy on earth, I would screw outside my species." Rachel snapped with a deadly glare.

>"Woah!" The guys all started laughing at the short guy who went bright red.
"Who's asking?" A tall, slim, dark-haired guy wandered behind the bar from out the back.

>"You Adrian Millar?" Rachel asked, slapping a hand on the granite bench top.
"Yeah. And you are...?" Millar looked Rachel up and down, slowing at her cleavage, then looked Frank over with obvious disgust.

>"Senior Detective Constable Rachel Goldstein..." Rachel began.
Millar looked like he'd seen a ghost, then sprinted out the back, overturning chairs and whatever he could find on the way.

>"Helen, we need back up here, quick!" Frank yelled into his mobile.
"STOP!!! POLICE!!!" Rachel and Frank hurtled after him, dodging falling boxes and furniture.

>Millar ran up to the door only to find it deadlocked. He rummaged in his pockets to find his keys, but couldn't find them. He looked back to see the two detectives flying at him, reaching for their handcuffs, then saw a chance to escape... the stairs. He ran up the stairs, tripping at the top. Rachel and Frank hurtled up after him. "Damn it!" Rachel swore as she too tripped on the top stair. She looked up to see Millar yanking the boards off the windows, and pushing one of them open. She pulled herself up and flung herself at Millar who was climbing out onto the veranda at the front of the shop. "STOP! POLICE!!!" Rachel yelled, grabbing at his T-shirt.

"Fuck off bitch!" Millar yelled, flinging off his T-shirt and sliding to the ground as some extra police cars pulled up, tyres shrieking and sirens blaring.

>He began to sprint down a side alley, but two uniforms tackled him, bringing him down into a muddy puddle, with rubbish cans falling in an avalanche around them.
Rachel and Frank looked at each other, puffing their hearts out. "After you!" Rachel motioned to Frank to go down the veranda.

>"What? I'm going down the stairs."
"Wimp."

>"Eh?"
"That looked like fun!"

>"Well why don't you go down then. Too scared?"
"What? Me? Oh, come on Holloway! You know me better than that!"

>"Yeah? You go first then."
"Okay then, I will!"

>"Go on then!"
"Fine!" And with that Rachel jumped out onto the veranda.

>"You coming?" She asked, sliding down to the edge.
"Yeah!" Frank said, stepping cautiously out.

>"Jeez, *hurry up* Holloway!" Rachel said impatiently, swinging off the guttering and landing with a light thud in front of a group of astonished officers on the pavement.
Frank gingerly slid down, then hung off the edge as he'd seen Rachel do. He let go and landed with a loud bang on the pavement, then fell on his backside. "Nice one Holloway!" Rachel's tall, mocking figure loomed over him as she offered him a hand and pulled him to his feet.

>The pair walked over to the car that was taking Millar back to the Sydney Water Police Headquarters.
"Didn't get ya far, eh Millar?" Frank smirked at him.

>"Piss of ya pigs!" Millar spat.
"Nice, polite gentleman, eh Millar? You didn't think *I* was a pig two minutes ago..." Rachel said matter-of-factly.

>"Piss off ya bitch!" Millar hissed.
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>"So, where's your wife, eh? *We* think she was in on it all. And we have a witness' report that she was." Rachel wandered around the room, looking at Millar.
Millar just sat there, refusing to say anything.

>"Oh come on mate! We've got ya! You had Lisa Hemmingway's clothes up there, her hair was on the floor, her blood was on the walls, we have the blindfold, everything in her story checks out! We've gotcha!" Frank smirked at Millar, satisfied on how this case had worked out.
"Fine! She's in Melbourne. Staying at her gangster brother's place." Millar said slowly.

>"Yeah? And why was Lisa in that house this morning?" Frank wanted to know this one.
"Coz I told her to burgle it. The dumb bitch needed to earn her living." Millar scowled.

>"Okay then, why did you kidnap her?" Frank asked savagely.
"Because... I dunno, I just picked her out coz she was the prettiest one on the street!"

>"Yeah? Right. Interview postponed, 9.32pm Thursday the twenty third of January, year two thousand." Frank motioned for Rachel to join him in the corridor.
"You think he's lying about the wife?" Frank asked.

>"Nah. I think he hates her." Rachel slumped against the wall.
"Yeah? Why?"

>"Because of the look of disgust he gets with every mention of her name. Ya say "Mary Allen Millar" and his jaw gets locked in place. Jeez, he made it sound like Lisa's a horse or something! Prettiest one on the street..."
"Mmm. Yeah, he does get a disgusted look on his face doesn't he... Right, you wanna call the boys in Melbourne or should I?" Frank stepped back towards the interview room door.

>"Yeah, I'll do it. You wanna finish interviewing him?" Rachel asked heading towards the office.
"Yeah. Any questions you want to ask him?" Frank reached for the doorknob.
>"Yeah, actually... Why did he take her, and why did he leave the kids like that." Rachel sighed, scuffing her foot on the grey lino.
"Right. Good as Goldie." Frank said, wandering back into the room.
>"Yeah... good as Goldie." Rachel quietly laughed to herself and wandered into the office.
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>"Mmm..." Rachel sighed after taking a big swig of her beer.
"Nice one?"
>"Yeah, not bad."
"You think Lisa's parents will be here yet?"

>"Nah. Apparently it's a four hour drive down to Wellington City, then another two and a half hours from Wellington to Sydney. They said they'll get in at about ten in the morning. Bet they can't wait to see her. Have they found the wife yet?" Rachel took another swig of her beer and grabbed a piece of the pizza that lay before them on the floor of Frank's apartment.
"Nah. Helen said she'd call us when she heard something." Frank stuffed the crust of his pizza into his moosh only to hear his phone ring.
>"Kafluffal... Farg!" Frank spat crumbs all over the floor.
"I'll get it shall I?" Rachel grinned, and headed towards the kitchen.

>"Gold... Holloway mansion, the skeleton in the closet speaking... Helen! Yeah, celebrating with pizza and beer. They found her? Oh, great!... Yeah... Oh, I was just about to head off... right. See you in the morning, eh?... Yeah, thanks Helen." Rachel hung up and walked back out to the lounge.
"They found her?"
>"Yep."
"Good."
>"Yep."
"Another piece?"
>"Yep."
"You say anything but yep?"
>"Yep."
"Can I have a million dollars?"
>"Get stuffed Holloway."
>*****

>"Mum?!" Lisa looked out the window of the D's office the next morning, waiting anxiously for her parents to arrive.
A tall middle-aged woman with Lisa's long blonde hair walked into reception. "Mum!" Lisa sprang up when she heard the woman's voice and sprinted down the steel staircase.

>She leapt through the door and grabbed the woman, both laughing and crying at the same time. Helen watched them, a satisfied twinkle gleaming in her eyes. This was what the job was all about... well, what it should be about. Rachel and Frank came down the stairs at a slightly slower pace, grinning happily at the scene in front of them. Lisa looked up at them gratefully, the appreciation glowing in her teary eyes. She broke away from the embrace and went over to Rachel. "Thanks... Don't know what I'd have done if I hadn't talked..." Lisa whispered, hugging Rachel tightly.
"No probs." Rachel hugged her back.

>"And I need to thank you too, Frank! Thanks." Lisa shook Frank's hand with the hand without the cast on.
"Anytime." Frank grinned.

>"Where's Dad?" Lisa turned back to her mother.
"Uh, he should be here right about... now." Mrs Hemmingway smiled and looked back as the door opened and a suit-clad middle-aged man jogged in.
>He stopped dead when he saw Lisa, then ran to her, picking her up and whirling her around. She hugged her and kissed the top of her

head, then looked up at the detectives. "You'll never know how grateful we are and will always be..." He began before his emotions got the better of him.
Frank and Rachel smiled, and watched the reunited family hug, along with the rest of the station; even Jeff had decided to make an appearance.

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That night it was the traditional booze up at Cutters Bar. Rachel and Frank sat at a table in a relatively quiet corner replaying the day in their minds. "You reckon the kids are okay?" Rachel asked suddenly, staring into the bottom of her beer glass.

>"Yeah, I think so. Can't be any worse off, that's for sure." Frank took a sip of his full glass of beer.
"True, true." Rachel agreed with a contented sigh.

>"Stop contemplating and come and join in the party!" Helen and Tayler suddenly appeared from nowhere followed by Tommy and Gavin.
"Yeah, I reckon!" Gavin piped up.

>"Yeah... Come on Frank! Let's go join them." Rachel put her glass down on the table with a thump.
"Okay." Frank got up and followed the others to the larger grouping of the "Water Rats" as they were fondly known.

>"You two did a good job." Jeff's compliments were very rare.
"Thank you sir." Both Detectives replied, amazed that he was even there.

>"You deserve it."
"Here's to solving cases as well as Frank and Rachel do!" Tommy raised his glass of wine in the air.

>"HERE, HERE!!!"

>*****

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Wow. Finished. Any good? Yes? You think it was? Okay then, e-mail me at sydneygirl2b@hotmail.com okay? I reply to everyone! Hope you enjoyed this one!

> <p><p>

End
file.